Quality ratings for salmon are typically based on freshness, color, fat content, and harvesting method rather than a universal, single-number grade. The most common indicators used by culinary experts and industry standards (like the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute) are outlined below.

Salmon Quality Rating Factors

- **Color (Vibrancy):** Highest quality salmon often has a deep red, orange, or "candy color" appearance.
- **Texture (Firmness):** High-quality fish is firm and bounces back when touched, rather than being soft or leaving a lingering indentation.
- **Smell (Freshness):** Fresh, high-quality salmon should smell neutral or have a light cucumber/melon scent, not a strong fishy odor.
- **Fat Lines (Appearance):**
  - **Wild:** Thinner, finer white fat lines.
  - **Farmed:** Thicker, more pronounced white fat stripes. North Coast Seafoods +2

Quality Grades (Alaska/Commercial)

1. **Grade A / Superior:** The highest quality, pristine, with perfect skin and flesh texture.
2. **Standard:** Good quality, but may have slight flaws in texture or color.
3. **Utility:** Acceptable quality, usually for immediate processing, but less perfect. Tridge +3

Salmon Species Quality Ranking

- **1. King (Chinook):** Considered the best for high-fat content and buttery texture.
- **2. Sockeye (Red):** Known for vibrant red color, intense flavor, and high oil content.
- **3. Coho (Silver):** Mild flavor, bright orange color, often considered the best "mid-range" option.
- **4. Pink/Chum (Keta):** Smaller, lighter in color, and often used for canning, smoking, or lower-cost meals. Tasting Table +4

Sustainability & Source Ratings (Seafood Watch)

- **Best Choice (Green):** Wild-caught Alaska salmon, U.S. salmon (indoor tanks), New Zealand Chinook.
- **Good Alternative (Yellow):** Some Canadian wild salmon, Faroe Islands farmed salmon.
- **Avoid (Red):** Most Atlantic farmed salmon (high environmental risk). Seafood Watch +4

Color Grading (Farmed Salmon)

Farmed salmon color is often measured using the **Roche SalmoFan™** scale.

- **Premium:** Usually a color score of **27 or higher**.
- **Average:** Scores lower on the color scale (around 22-24). yousyokuburi.com +3

"Sushi-Grade" Warning

"Sushi-grade" or "Sashimi-grade" is not a formal, government-regulated grade. It is a marketing term, often indicating the fish is high-quality, frozen properly, and safe to eat raw. The most trusted "sushi-grade" is typically King or Sockeye salmon due to their high fat and firm texture. Facebook +4